

NIRPC Full Commission Meeting

6100 Southport Road, Portage, IN

January 19, 2023 Minutes

Call to Order

Chairman Justin Kiel called the meeting to order at 9:07 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance. The meeting was streamed live on YouTube.

New Appointments to the Commission

Dave Hollenbeck announced the appointments to the Commission of Ellen Hundt (Beverly Shores), Jane Jordan (Burns Harbor), Connie Gramarossa (LaPorte County Commissioner), Justin Kiel (LaPorte County Council), Barb Regnitz (Porter County Commissioner), Red Stone (Porter County Council), and Regina Ruddell (Pottawattomie Park).

Justin Kiel welcomed the newly appointed Commissioners and impressed upon them that the work performed through this commission is important. This council of government represents 750,000 people, dealing with regional matters of transportation, environment, and economic development and oversees a \$1.5 billion quadrennial Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Roll call - Taken by Candice Eklund

Present

The 37 Commissioners present at the meeting included Thomas Black (Highland), Charlie Brown (Lake county Council), Bob Carnahan (Cedar Lake), Bill Carroll (Lake Station), Don Craft (Porter), Joshleen Denham (Trail Creek), Tom Dermody (La Porte), Daina Dumbrys (Michiana Shores), Denise Ebert (Wanatah), Bill Emerson (Lake County Surveyor), Robert Forster (Kouts), Connie Gramarossa (LaPorte County Commissioner), Richard Hardaway (Merrillville), Ellen Hundt (Beverly Shores), Jack Jeralds (Schneider), Jane Jordan (Burns Harbor), Justin Kiel (LaPorte County Council), Scott Kingan (Ogden Dunes), Andrew Kyres (Crown Point), Robert LeMay (Long Beach), Sue Lynch (Portage), Lori Mercer (Westville), Wendy Mis (Munster), Edward Morales (Porter Township), Matt Murphy (Valparaiso), David Peeler (Hebron), Jerome Prince (Gary), Barb Regnitz (Porter County Commissioner), Regina Ruddell (Pottawattomie Park), Tom Schmitt (Schererville), Brian Snedecor (Hobart), Ronald (Red) Stone (Porter County Council), Gerald Swets (St. John), Sharon Szwedo (New Chicago), Mary Tanis (Dyer), Jim Ton (Chesterton), and George Topoll (Union Township). Also present was Adam Parkhouse representing INDOT.

The 13 Commissioners absent included Kyle Allen, (Lake County Commissioner), Duane Arndt (Kingsford Heights), Jeannette Bapst (Dune Acres), Kevin Breitzke (Porter County Surveyor), Anthony Copeland (East Chicago), Jon Derwinski (Winfield), Tony Hendricks (LaPorte County Surveyor), Tom McDermott (Hammond), Duane Parry (Michigan City), Jim Pressel (Governor Appointee), Rick Ryfa (Griffith), Steve Spebar (Whiting), and John Yelkich (Lowell).

La Crosse, Kingsbury, and The Pines have appointed no representatives to NIRPC.

Staff present included Ty Warner, Thomas Dow, Talaya Jones, Denarie Kane, Mitch Barloga, Charles Bradsky, Kevin Polette, Candice Eklund, and attorney Dave Hollenbeck.

Public Comment – There were no public comments.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the December 8, 2022 Executive Board meeting were approved on motion by Bob Carnahan and seconded by Tom Dermody.

Presentation of Norman E. Tufford Award – Ty Warner

The Norman Tufford Award “for exceptional dedication and service to NIRPC” was presented to Michael Griffin, former Clerk-Treasurer of Highland for three decades and previously State Senator. Griffin served as Chair of the NIRPC Commission in both 2017 and 2020. “This is an award that recognizes regional commitment to Northwest Indiana,” said Ty Warner. John Swanson, NIRPC’s prior Executive Director, added, “this award recognizes people who have also made outstanding contributions to NIRPC and Local Government.”

Michael Griffin was very thankful for the kindness bestowed on him and said it was good to see so many of his former colleagues. Mr. Griffin spoke of the good Samaritan from his faith tradition, stating, “a person from Samaria helped a wounded man when many people of his nation passed him by, because this man saw him as a neighbor. A neighbor teaches us who our neighbors really are, much in the same idea with the work being done at NIRPC. Everyone in this room is a neighbor and everyone can be an ambassador for regionalism.”

Report of the Executive Director – Ty Warner

Ty Warner reported another tradition acknowledged at the January Commission meeting is to recognize perfect attendance at all of the meetings the prior year. Those acknowledged were Richard Hardaway, Justin Kiel, Jim Ton, and George Topoll. Mr. Warner also recognized the 10 Commissioners who attended all the Full Commission meetings last year. Those acknowledged were Kevin Breitzke, Bob Carnahan, Joshleen Denham, Tom Dermody, Denise Ebert, Bill Emerson, Robert Forster, Sue Lynch, Wendy Mis, and Tom Schmitt.

Just Kiel recognized Ty Warner for his 10 years of service with NIRPC.

Officers and Executive Board for 2023 – Justin Kiel

Justin Kiel presented the recommendations of the Nominating Committee for 2023. No additional nominations were made.

Elected as Chair for 2023 was Richard Hardaway, Town of Merrillville. Tom Dermody, Mayor of La Porte was elected as Vice Chair. Sue Lynch, Mayor of Portage, was elected as Secretary, and Wendy Mis, Clerk-Treasurer of the Town of Munster, was elected Treasurer.

Members elected to the Executive Board included Kyle Allen, Jr. (County Commissioner) and Bill Emerson (County Surveyor), representing Lake County; County Council Justin Kiel and Clerk-Treasurer Denise Ebert (Wanatah), representing LaPorte County; and Kevin Breitzke (County Surveyor) and Councilman James Ton (Chesterton), representing Porter County. Justin Kiel, LaPorte County Council now also serves as Immediate Past Chair. The continued appointment of Representative Jim Pressel as the Governor’s appointee to the Executive Board is assumed. On a motion by Barb Regnitz and a second by Brian Snedecor, the Commission voted to adopt the 2023 slate as presented.

To celebrate his service as 2022 Chairman, Ty Warner presented Justin Kiel with the gavel plaque and thanked him for his service as chairperson last year and for being extremely active and committed. Justin Kiel turned the gavel over to newly elected Chair, Richard Hardaway. Mr. Hardaway thanked the nominating committee for this experience and said he will continue the traditions of this position.

Finance & Personnel Committee (F & P) – Tom Dermody

Tom Dermody reported the F & P Committee met this morning to review the financial reports, bank reconciliations, and claims registers for October and November 2022. The F&P Committee brought the two action items below to the Full Commission for consideration and approval.

1. Executive Director Contract, 2023 Addendum to Employment Agreement: Dave Hollenbeck reported on the addendum to the Executive Director’s contract saying an evaluation was completed and Mr. Warner will receive a salary increase of 7% in calendar year 2023. An evaluation will also be completed next year to determine his salary increase in 2024. On motion by Jim Ton and seconded by Sue Lynch, the Full Commission approved the Addendum to the Executive Director’s contract.
2. Resolution #23-01, Calendar Year 2023 Budget: On motion by Mary Tanis and seconded by Tom Dermody, the Full Commission approved NIRPC’s calendar year budget for 2023.

Technical Planning Committee (TPC) – Jim Ton

Jim Ton reported the TPC met on January 10, 2023. NIRPC staff presented the schedule of application review and approval for the current Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) cycle. The next TPC meeting is scheduled for February 28, 2022.

- Resolution #23-02, FY 2022-2026 TIP Amendment #22-08 and #22-08.5: Charles Brodsky reported there were no comments received from the public or the Intergovernmental Consultation Group (ICG) for these

amendments. On motion by Jim Ton and seconded by Barb Regnitz, the Full Commission approved Resolution #23-02.

Economic Development District Report – Denarie Kane

Ms. Kane reported the final version of the *Economic Recovery and Resilience Plan* is posted on NIRPC's website and hard copies are available. Meetings are being held with Steering Committee organizations and others to complete the implementation matrix and its timetable. Coordination discussion has been held about the update for the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and *Ignite the Region* Plan update. Community tours are in progress with more tours to be scheduled to learn about economic development projects that should be included in the CEDS update. Regarding the loan programs, *Recover NWI* loans are on pause until this loan fund increases. However, two loan inquiries were received and information provided. Education related to new and existing EDA grants is ongoing.

INDOT – Adam Parkhouse

Adam Parkhouse announced applications for the next round of Community Crossings are due by January 27, 2023. With the unseasonably mild temperatures, the crews at INDOT are starting their maintenance work plan for the year in preparation of significant snow.

Other Business

Mary Tanis discussed the construction on Route 30 in Dyer that caused huge backups because some of the side streets were closed off. It was felt INDOT could better coordinate with the individual towns prior to construction. Adam Parkhouse agreed and stated they do try to coordinate the upcoming work each Friday.

Brian Snedecor addressed project cost increases and asked Adam Parkhouse if there had been discussions with INDOT to adjust the maximum of \$1 million on Community Crossings awards. Adam Parkhouse said the maximum award amounts are set by State Legislature. Jim Pressel had a discussion with the Commissioners during the last Commission meeting he attended and said discussion were ongoing, but he was not aware where they stood.

Announcements

Bob Carnahan announced the Indiana Patriot Guard invited the Cedar Lake Town Council to the Cedar Lake Fire Department on February 25 at 1:00 p.m. for an Honor and Remembrance flag presentation to the family of Timothy Ray White, a fire fighter who lost his life in 2011. Mr. Carnahan also announced there will be a Chamber luncheon today where the Hanover Superintendent will give a report on the three different school systems in Cedar Lake.

Ty Warner concluded the meeting by thanking the commissioners for their attendance to reach a quorum. He feels in addition to the value of their attendance for actual agenda items, are the discussions that take place before and after the meetings and the opportunity to connect with each other across the region.

Hearing no other business, Justin Kiel adjourned the meeting at 9:52 a.m. The next meeting on March 17 will be an Executive Board meeting.

The livestream video recording for this meeting is available on NIRPC's YouTube Channel at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=01v4cf6204s>